

Body of Teen Found Hanging at Abandoned Missile Site in Marlton

May 19, 2002 – Evesham Township, New Jersey

Residents of a quiet neighborhood in Marlton, New Jersey were shaken Sunday afternoon after the body of a teenage boy was discovered hanging from a tree near an abandoned Cold War–era missile installation behind the Briarwood neighborhood.

Authorities in Evesham Township, New Jersey said the victim was **Jacob Lee**, 17, a local high school student whose body was discovered around 3:40 p.m. along a wooded trail leading to the former Nike Missile Battery PH-32.

The discovery was made by a woman walking along the trail with her nephew. According to police, the pair initially noticed a **strong odor** coming from deeper in the woods near the abandoned launch site.

“They reported a foul smell and went off the path slightly to investigate,” an Evesham police spokesperson said.

“That’s when they saw what appeared to be a body hanging from a tree.”

The woman immediately called 911.

The wooded area where the body was found sits behind the Briarwood housing development and contains remnants of the long-abandoned missile battery.

The facility was part of a ring of Cold War defenses built in the 1950s to protect the Philadelphia region from Soviet bomber attacks. The Marlton site opened in 1955 and once housed Nike-Ajax surface-to-air missiles before being deactivated in 1963.

Today, very little of the original installation remains intact. What once served as a military defense site has deteriorated into a **large scrap-strewn clearing in the woods**.

The area is described by residents as a **junk-filled field littered with debris, rusted metal, broken concrete, and discarded trash**. Scattered around the site are **several concrete stairwells and openings that descend underground**, remnants of former missile storage and maintenance structures. Many of the underground areas are partially collapsed or flooded, leaving only exposed staircases and shafts that disappear below the surface.

The deteriorating structures, combined with piles of dumped garbage and abandoned materials, have turned the location into what some locals describe as **more of a scrap yard than a former military base**.

Despite its condition, the site has become a destination for teenagers and urban explorers who venture through the woods to see the remaining underground entrances and crumbling concrete foundations.

Police and investigators from the Burlington County Medical Examiner’s Office arrived at the scene shortly after the call.

Authorities said the body appeared to have been there for some time before it was discovered.

The area was temporarily sealed off while investigators photographed the scene and recovered evidence from around the tree line near the old missile berms and concrete debris.

Officials said an autopsy would determine the exact cause of death and whether foul play was involved.

Neighbors in the Briarwood development expressed shock that such a discovery could happen so close to their homes.

Many residents said the wooded land behind the development had long been considered eerie due to its history as a missile base and the **abandoned underground stairwells and junk-covered clearing** left behind.

“I’ve walked those trails before,” said one resident who lives near the edge of the development. “You never expect something like this.”

Parents in the neighborhood also voiced concern about teenagers entering the restricted area.

Investigators said they were working to piece together the events leading up to Jacob Lee's death, including when he was last seen and why he may have gone into the wooded missile site.

Police asked anyone with information about the teen's movements prior to May 19 to contact the Evesham Township Police Department.

As dusk fell Sunday evening, crime scene tape still surrounded part of the trail—marking a grim discovery in a place once built to defend the nation during the Cold War.